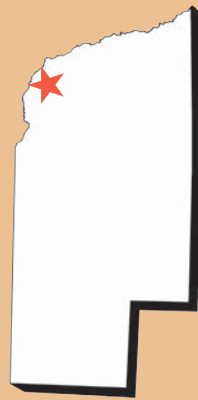


NEBRASKA  
GAME  
PARKS

# Ponca STATE PARK



Photo by Fran Kingsbury



## PONCA STATE PARK

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Visit us on Facebook/Ponca State Park/Covt.

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## PONCA STATE PARK

Situated astride the picturesque Missouri River Bluffs in northeast Nebraska, Ponca State Park is the eastern gateway of the Missouri National Recreational River. Designated under the Scenic River Act in 1978, this 59-mile unchanneled section of the Missouri gives visitors a glimpse of how rivers looked prior to modern changes. Established in 1934, the first 200 acres of the park were donated by the Ponca American Legion Post. Ponca State Park now encompasses 2,273 acres of heavily-forested bluffs, bottomland wetlands and prairies.

The park is located two miles from the town of Ponca, just off Scenic Byway 12. Both are named for the Native American tribe that once inhabited the area. On August 22, 1804, Lewis and Clark passed near the park during their epic journey up the Missouri River. Since the park offered some of the first scenic vistas of what this great river looked like, it is a featured attraction on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Ponca State Park has also earned a place in The Camping Club's America's Top 100 Campgrounds.

## LODGING

- **Mini-Lodges** -15 Mini-Lodges featuring four bedrooms and two full baths are perfect for group and multiple-family rentals. Within walking distance of the Resource and Education Center, these Mini-Lodges are equipped with all modern day amenities including big screen TV, cable, wireless internet, wood fireplace, gas grill and outdoor decks. Open year round. Off-season discount rates available.
- **"Green" Cabins** - Two strawbale construction cabins feature two bedrooms and fully-equipped

kitchen. Amenities also include big screen TV, cable, wireless internet, gas grill, outdoor deck and more. Open year round. Off-season discounted rates offered.

- **Rustic Cabins** - Built in the 1950s, the 14 two bedroom log-style cabins have modern restrooms, a/c and heat and kitchenettes. Open mid-April through mid-November.
- **RV/Camper Sites** - Over 73 paved sites and 20 non-paved riverfront sites. Two shower houses, restrooms, dump stations, picnic tables, drinking water and fire rings are just some of the amenities. Fees are charged for all camping sites. Oak Bluff Campground electrical sites are reservation only; Turkey Ridge and Riverfront campground sites are first-come, first-serve.
- **Primitive Campsites/Tent Sites** - Over 70 sites, some are hike-in/remote. Several primitive areas can accommodate group camping.

## CONFERENCE AND EVENT PLANNING

Ponca State Park has meeting and conference rooms as well as kitchen facilities that are available to rent in the Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center. Perfect for weddings, business retreats and conferences, and family reunions; these rooms can accommodate up to 300 people.

## ATTRACTIONS

- **Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center (MNRREC)** -17,000 square-foot facility featuring a large interpretive display and exhibit area, field laboratory, gift shop, conference and meeting rooms, and Park staff offices.
- **Bird Watching** - Listed by National Audubon Society as

one of the "Important Bird Areas in the U.S."

- **Eric Wiebe Shooting Complex** - Weekly shooting events/activities scheduled from Spring to Fall; Archery range open to public; all other firearms may only be fired within an official Park program led by Park staff
- **Family Fishing Pond** - Seasonally-stocked with trout and other game fish
- **Fishing** - River fish for catfish, smallmouth bass, walleye, sauger and more
- **Golf** - Public 9-hole course located at Park entrance
- **Group Programs** - Plan a special program for your school, scout and other group
- **Horseback Trail Rides** - Guided trail rides run Memorial Day to Labor Day
- **River Access with Boat Ramp**
- **Swimming Pool** - Open mid-June to Labor Day; lifeguards on duty.
- **Towers in Time** - Sculpture of three towers celebrating the origins of life, geological forms and the mammals found in the

region in past eras through present day. A waterfall entitled Stairway of Falls and Reflecting Pond celebrates water and its foundation for all life in the Earth's ecosystem.

- **Trails** - Over 20 miles of trails for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing
- **Historic Shelter Houses** - Two CCC-built shelter houses are perfect for group picnics
- **Summer Activities** - Outdoor education programs, sand volleyball court, playgrounds,



Missouri National Recreational River Resource and Education Center offers a panoramic view of the famous river (cover). Towers of Time is a tribute to the flora, fauna and history of this historic area (back cover). Archery is just one of many activities available to park visitors. Front view of the resource and education center.

hayrack tours, Fishing Tackle Loaner Program and more

- **Winter Activities** - Sledding hill and new for 2012, groomed cross-country ski trails.

## EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Ponca State Park features one of the state's most comprehensive outdoor and environmental education programs. Naturalists help guide and educate visitors on the history, biology, ecology, astronomy, geology and archeology of the area. From Memorial Day to Labor Day weekends, a visitor can attend daily programs to learn how to fish, shoot a bow, shoot a muzzleloader, kayak, canoe, identify nature, cook in a Dutch oven and more. Programs are scheduled two weeks in advance and most are low-cost or free. Nature programs can be designed for your scout troop, family group or any other group with two week's notice.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Plan your visit around the many annual events held at Ponca State Park. New events may be added so call ahead to get any updates and more details on any of these events.

## MARSH MADNESS

Enjoy the awe and wonder of waterfowl migration along the Missouri River. Guided sunrise and sunset sessions on viewing blinds, continental breakfast, kids activities, and birding programs. Discounted Mini-Lodge and rustic cabin packages available.

## FATHER'S DAY FOSSIL HUNT AND FISH FRY

Paleontologist-guided plesiosaur/fossil dig, kids fossil boxes, treasure hunt and more.

## 3-D ARCHERY SHOOT

All Iowa Bowhunters Association

classifications and styles of shootings offered. Public invited to compete and demo hottest new bows and crossbows. Prizes and giveaways. Sponsored by Scheels, a portion of the proceeds go to support Ponca State Park's Archery Education Program.

## SHOOTING SPORTS SKILLS DAY CAMP

Hone your shooting techniques. Spend the day practicing with various firearms and bows in different types of realistic settings.

## ARCHERY SIGHT-IN DAYS

Archery range will sport 3-D target ranges that include big and small game, deer herd and a just-for-fun range.

## ANNUAL MISSOURI RIVER OUTDOOR EXPO

Held in September, experience over 80 exhibits and hands-on demos on everything from kayaking, hiking, shooting, hunting, bow fishing, wildlife viewing, conservation and other outdoor pursuits. All activities are free thanks to the many sponsors.

## HOMEMADE LIVING WEEKEND

This event focuses on "passing-on" many of the skills and techniques of our rural heritage. Demonstrations include canning and preserving, bee-keeping, gardening, fiber arts, quilting, apple press/cider making, and much more. The event also features kids games, horse-drawn wagon rides, and wine and cheese tasting.

## HALLOWFEST

Spooky fun! Haunted hayrack rides, pumpkin rolling and carving contest, campsite decorating contest and autumn crafts.

## ANNUAL CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

This event coincides with the Audubon's Society's National Christmas Bird Count. Amateur and expert birdwatchers are invited.

## OUTDOOR COOKING CAMP

Hands-on demonstrations for all levels of outdoor cooking. Classes include grilling, smoking meat, dehydration, Dutch oven cooking, fish cleaning, sausage making, campfire cooking and more. Lodging packages available in Mini-Lodges and rustic cabins.

## FAUNA AND FLORA

The dense woodlands offer a haven for woodland wildlife. During the daytime, whitetail deer and wild turkeys are often seen throughout the Park. Toward nighttime, the sounds of howling coyotes and the "who-who-are-you" of the barred owl echo through the bluffs. Red fox, gray fox (an uncommon relative of the red fox), bobcat, raccoons, opossum and other small mammals can be spotted.

In the spring, the woodlands come alive with the sounds of migrant and resident songbirds. During peak migration (late April to early May) the park is a must-stop for any birdwatcher. Warblers, scarlet tanagers, northern orioles, red-breasted grosbeaks, indigo buntings and ruby-throated hummingbirds are just a few of the possible sightings.

The woodlands and prairie ridge tops burst into bloom from late April to early June. Among the most common woodland flowers are Dutchmen's breeches, bloodroot, Canada violet, blue phlox, columbine, waterleaf and white cicely. Prairie plants include yucca, shell-leaf penstemon, prairie larkspur, purple coneflower, pasque flower and

purple prairie clover. Native shrubs include gooseberry, wild plum, chokecherry and snowberry.

Bur oak is the predominate tree species, but they are liberally interspersed with walnut, elm, basswood, Kentucky coffee and hackberry.

Almost in the heart of the Park is the "Old Oak Tree." In 1964, the ancient specimen was officially aged at 320 years which dates the sapling 24 years before the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock.

On summer nights, the repetitious call of the whippoorwill and a chorus of tree frogs and crickets resound. Turkey vultures soar overhead and in late June, snow-like showers of cotton from cottonwood trees signifies it is time to catch catfish.

In the fall, the skies are filled with migrating ducks, geese and other birds.

Come winter, the park is home to bald eagles often seen nesting along the river and a great time to view hardy songbirds at the feeders.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

A current Nebraska park entry permit is required for all vehicles entering the park. Permits are available at the office, as are hunting and fishing licenses.

A gift shop with limited concessions is located at the Park office. Groceries, gas, outdoor gear and supplies are available from merchants in Ponca as well as a medical clinic and dentist.

## RESERVATIONS

Park lodging reservations may be made at [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org). Phone reservations can be made through the Nebraska State Park call center at 402-471-1414 or directly to Ponca State Park at 402-755-2284. Call Ponca State Park directly for conference or group reservations.



This property showcases a variety of historic Missouri River habitats. Future plans for this addition include nature programming, river access, hunting, and fishing.

**NEBRASKA**  
GAME  **PARKS**  
**See You Out There**



- |                     |                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Park Headquarters   | Parking                    |
| Restrooms           | Scenic Overlook            |
| Showers             | Dump Station               |
| Picnic Shelter      | Amphitheater               |
| Water               | Playground                 |
| RV Camping          | Watchable Wildlife Viewing |
| Tent Camping        | Hiking Trails              |
| Group Camping       | Boat Ramp                  |
| Backpacking Camping | Concession Trail Rides     |
| Cabins              | Highland Oaks Golf Course  |
| Swimming Pool       | Ponca State Park Areas     |

